ACT Government

LOWER COTTER CATCHMENT

DRAFT RESERVE MANAGEMENT PLAN 2017

Summary



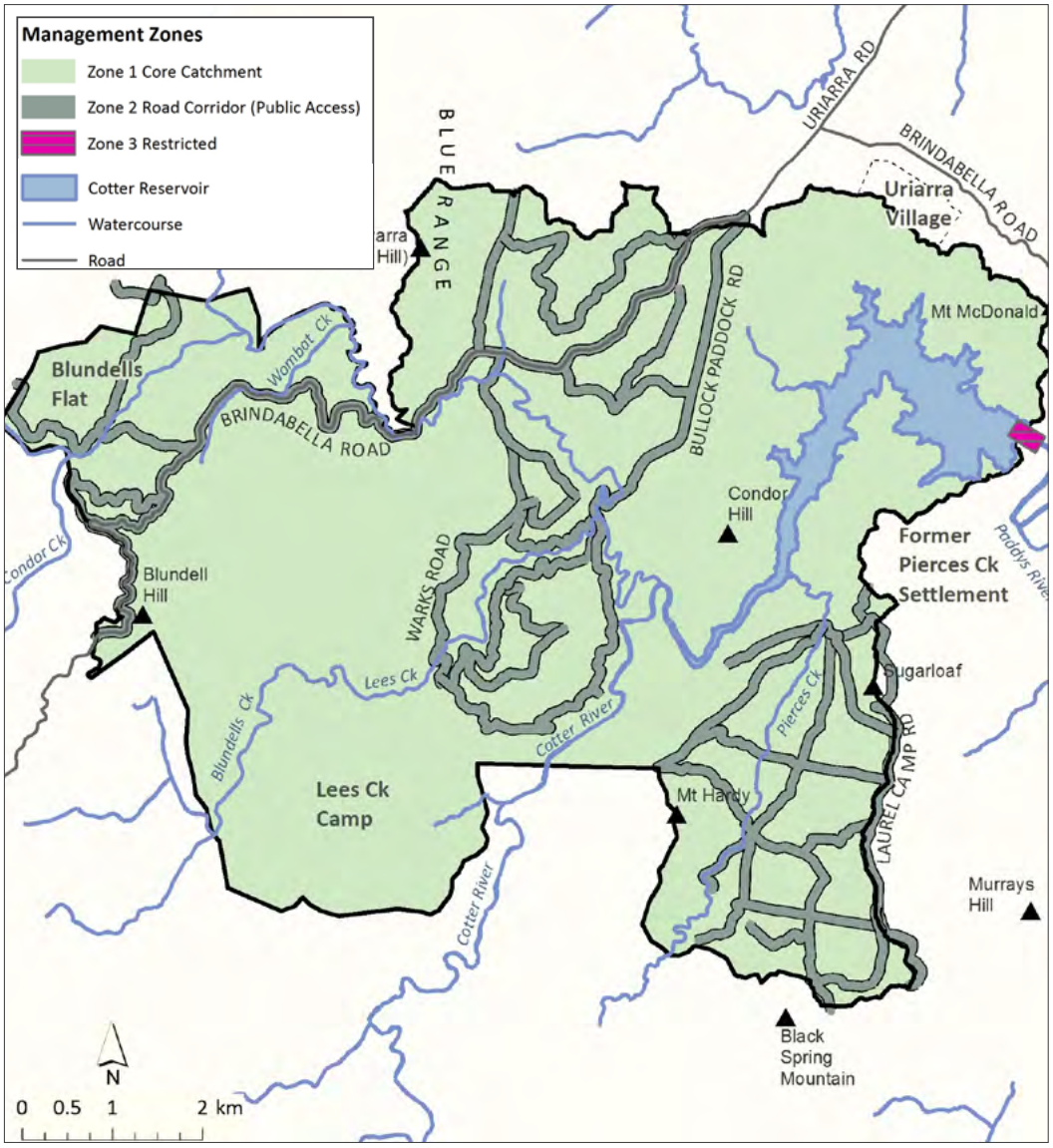


PROTECTING AN ENDURING SUPPLY OF HIGH QUALITY WATER FOR CANBERRA

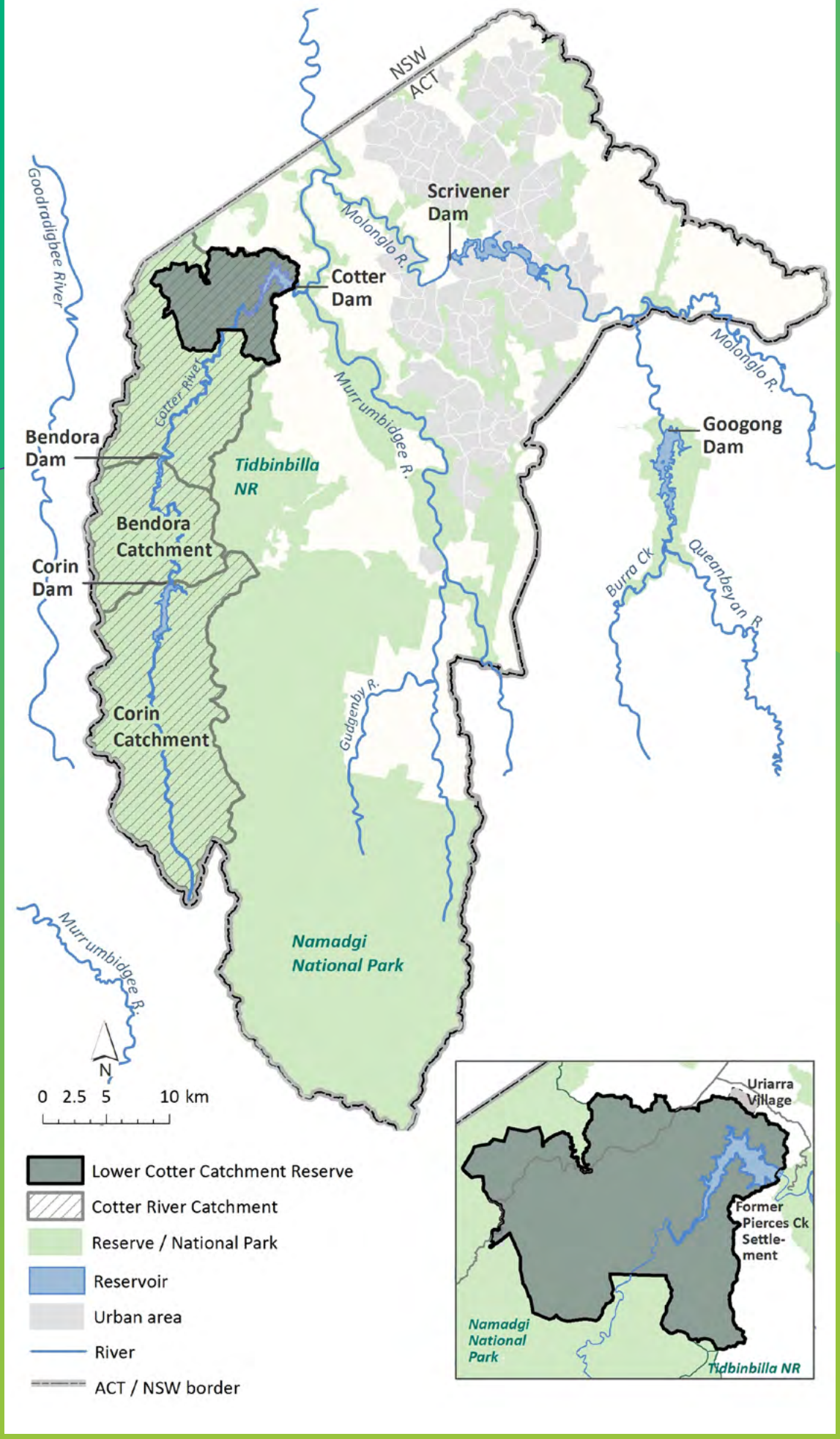
Cotter Dam was Canberra's only water supply for many years. It was replaced as the primary source in the 1960s by Bendora and Corin Dams, and supplemented more recently by Googong Reservoir on the Queanbeyan River in NSW.

In response to the millennium drought and the devastating 2003 bushfires, the ACT Government committed significant resources to secure Canberra's future water supply. In 2013 a new, higher Cotter Dam wall was completed, which enlarged the reservoir's capacity from 4 to 79.4 gigalitres—an increase of 35% in water storage capacity.

Drawing water again from the Cotter Dam has led to a renewed focus on the reliability of water resources and a stable and healthy surrounding catchment. With the support of community volunteers, extensive revegetation after the 2003 fires is continuing. Over time, the reserve will be restored to a fully-functioning landscape of native vegetation, producing clean water, conserving natural and cultural values, and providing low key recreational opportunities for ACT residents and visitors.



LOCATION OF LOWER COTTER CATCHMENT



A NEW MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE LOWER COTTER CATCHMENT

A new draft Lower Cotter Catchment Reserve Management Plan has been prepared to guide management of the catchment over the next 10 years. The vision: ***A recovering landscape, the Lower Cotter Catchment provides a reliable supply of clean water for all Canberrans, while contributing to nature conservation, research, and recreational and educational opportunities for residents and visitors.***

PROTECTING WATER QUALITY

The soils of the Lower Cotter Catchment are highly erodible. Maintaining vegetation cover and limiting activities that can lead to increased erosion are important to maintain good water quality. Ex-forestry trails have been identified as a major source of sediment and over 100 km have been closed and rehabilitated. The draft plan proposes to keep the trail network under review. Risks of water contamination by micro-organisms and other pathogens, chemicals or other pollutants will be minimised.

CONSERVING THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Although the Lower Cotter Catchment has a history of disturbance from human activity, including clearing for grazing, planting with pines, and severe fire damage, the area retains significant natural values. It provides important landscape-scale connections for wildlife movement, supports a number of threatened plant species and communities, and provides habitat for some declining woodland birds, as well as native fish and invertebrates.

The draft reserve management plan sets out policies and actions to maintain or rehabilitate native vegetation communities, control weeds and conserve threatened plants and animals. The plan proposes that remaining pine plantations be returned to native vegetation as soon as possible, allowing for a commercial return.

CARING FOR CULTURAL HERITAGE

The Lower Cotter Catchment has extensive evidence of Aboriginal occupation over thousands of years. The plan provides for the protection and interpretation of Aboriginal heritage in collaboration with Traditional Custodians and Aboriginal Representative Organisations and for their involvement in land management activities. Remaining evidence of early European settlement and historical forestry activities will be managed in accordance with international best practice.



Lower Cotter and dam from Blue Range



PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR LOW-IMPACT RECREATION

Consistent with the primary objective of protecting water supply, recreational use of the Lower Cotter Catchment will remain low impact, with a matching level of facilities. The draft management plan identifies two management zones within the reserve and sets out which activities are permitted/not permitted within each zone.

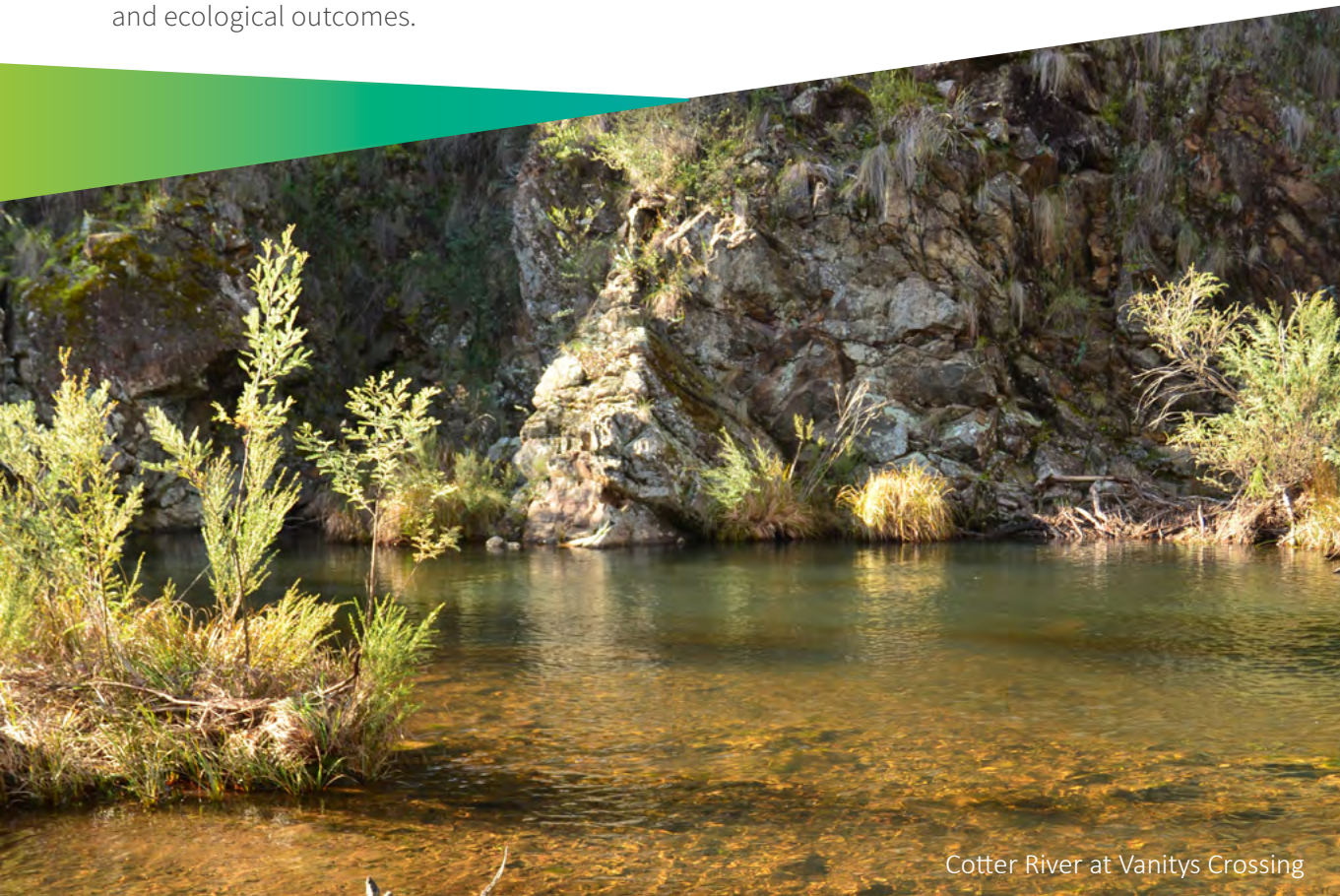
Existing restrictions on activities such as motor sport events, trail bike riding, camping, lighting fires and firewood collection will remain. Swimming is not permitted in the reserve and all recreational activities are prohibited in the reservoir. Fishing is only permitted in the Cotter River upstream of the junction with Condor Creek. Horse riding is permitted west of Brindabella Road.

Driving (2WD and 4WD) and trail bike riding are only permitted on publicly accessible roads. Walking is permitted everywhere but cycling (including mountain bike riding) is permitted only on publicly accessible roads and management trails.

Recreational activities in the reserve will continue to be monitored to ensure they do not adversely affect water quality or other catchment values.

MANAGING FIRE

Fire management in the Lower Cotter Catchment will aim to maximise compatibility between fire fuel management priorities and preferred water catchment and ecological outcomes.



Cotter River at Vanitys Crossing



Cotter Dam with Blue Range behind

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

There is a strong recent history of community involvement in the reserve since the 2003 fire, with nearly 15,000 volunteers spending more than 47,000 hours planting over 306,000 trees and shrubs. The Lower Cotter Catchment Draft Reserve Management Plan encourages on-going community participation in stewardship of the catchment. Ongoing interpretation and education activities are proposed to improve community knowledge about the catchment's values and promote appropriate use.

YOUR SAY

The Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate welcomes written comments on the draft Reserve Management Plan for the Lower Cotter Catchment.

Information is available at: www.yoursay.act.gov.au

YOU CAN MAKE WRITTEN COMMENTS BY:

- Visiting: www.yoursay.act.gov.au
- Emailing: environment@act.gov.au
- Posting: Manager, Conservation Planning
  Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate
  PO Box 158, Canberra ACT 2601

Comments close: 10 March 2017



Community planting in the Lower Cotter Catchment